

SERGEI TANEYEV (1856-1915): AN ANALYSIS OF HIS PIANO CONCERTO IN E-FLAT

MAJOR AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO TCHAIKOVSKY'S

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1

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This lecture recital seeks to prove that Sergei Taneyev's only piano concerto is a valuable addition to the piano concerto repertoire for historical and theoretical examination. Taneyev's biographical background proves he was one of the major figures in Russian musical life during the late nineteenth century. For one who had such an important role in music history, it is an unfortunate that his music has not been popular. Through letters to contemporary composers and friends, Taneyev's master teacher Tchaikovsky revealed why his music and piano concerto were not as popular as they should have been. This lecture recital examines Taneyev's compositional style and illustrates his influence in the works of his famous student Sergei Rachmaninoff through examples from Taneyev's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2.

Taneyev's Piano Concerto and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 have both similarities and differences that resulted from the composers' close relationship. Letters between the teacher and student enlighten readers to the compositional process of the two piano concertos and demonstrates the value of Taneyev's Piano Concerto.

A detailed theoretical analysis is included in this dissertation. The principal themes and motifs are presented with a detailed analysis of the structure of the concerto's first movement as the themes, motifs, and variations are woven into a unified piece of music. The second movement of the concerto is remarkable for its harmonic progressions.

This research substantiates that Taneyev's Piano Concerto is valuable to the current piano repertoire and worthy of performances throughout the world. The concerto occupies an important role in music history and theory and is useful for piano students to study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sergei Taneyev was one of the major figures in Russian musical life during the late nineteenth century. He was a respected teacher of such students as Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Lyapunov, and Glière; director of Moscow Music Conservatory; and a close friend of many important people in Russian music history including the Russian Five¹ and the Rubinstein brothers. In addition, he was a virtuoso concert pianist who won the first gold medal ever given to a student for composition and performance from the Moscow Music Conservatory. Of even greater importance, Taneyev was Tchaikovsky's favorite composition pupil and considered the most trusted musician among Tchaikovsky's friends. Taneyev performed at the premiere concert of almost all of Tchaikovsky's piano and orchestral works. In 1878, he took over the responsibilities of Nikolay Rubinstein and Nikolay Hubert in the Moscow Conservatory, teaching piano, harmony, orchestration, and composition. In 1885, after Nikolay Rubinstein died and with Tchaikovsky's strong recommendation, Taneyev became the director of the Moscow Conservatory.

It is unfortunate that for the past one hundred years there has been little research regarding Taneyev and his music which has played such an important role in music history. Many books mention Taneyev, particularly books about Tchaikovsky, but none focus on Taneyev. This lecture recital will focus on Taneyev's Piano Concerto, which is the only piano concerto he wrote, along with a brief biographical background, a theoretical analysis, and a comparison with Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.

Considering Tchaikovsky and Taneyev's close relationship, it is not difficult to see how Taneyev's Piano Concerto, composed less than two years after Tchaikovsky's First Piano

¹Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Mussorgsky, and Cui were known as the "Russian Five."

Concerto, was greatly influenced by his master. Tchaikovsky's comments must have affected Taneyev as he wrote his own piano concerto. Taneyev's original manuscript has over one hundred markings and suggestions in Tchaikovsky's handwriting.²

Taneyev's music is currently undergoing a major reevaluation through recordings and performances. Joseph Banowetz and the Russian Philharmonic of Moscow, conducted by Thomas Sanderling, recently made a world-premiere recording of Taneyev's piano concerto. In addition to this recording, some of Taneyev's piano solos have been recorded by Joseph Banowetz. One recording includes a narrative read by Vladimir Ashkenazy. Considering Taneyev's significant background as a great piano virtuoso, as Rachmaninoff's teacher, and as Tchaikovsky's favorite composition student, people may wonder why he is not as famous as Tchaikovsky, why his music is not as popular as Rachmaninoff's, why he only wrote one piano concerto which he never completed, and how his piano concerto compares to his contemporaries' compositions.

The purpose of this lecture recital is to explain why Taneyev's music was not popular, to give a detailed analysis of Taneyev's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, and to demonstrate that this concerto is worthy of being brought on stage. Of greater importance, this lecture recital reveals the close relationship between Taneyev and Tchaikovsky from a musical standpoint and explains why Tchaikovsky considered Taneyev his most trusted musician. This research shows the similarities between Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 and Taneyev's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major probably resulted from the composers' friendship. The similarities between the two concertos are not difficult to ascertain, and the differences result from interesting events.

For one who had such a great musical role in music history, it is unfortunate there is relatively little research available regarding Taneyev and his music. Jeremy Norris wrote a brief

² Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 73.

discussion of Taneyev's Piano Concerto in his book *The Russian Piano Concerto*, published in 1994.³ November 25, 2006, was the 150th anniversary of Taneyev's birth. There is an urgent need for research to fill the gap regarding the importance of Taneyev's role in music. Hopefully, this lecture recital will bring people's attention to Taneyev's music, open up a new field of literature, and give pianists a new repertoire that is worthy to play on stage.

³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Sergei Ivanovich Taneyev (1856-1915), a Russian musician, had a very active and successful career as a pianist, composer, teacher, and director of the Moscow Conservatory. Born on November 25, 1856, Taneyev was the son of a government official with aristocratic relations and the nephew of Alexander Sergeyevich Taneyev, a composer in the style of Russian nationalism. Sergei Taneyev began his piano study at the age of five. Five years later he was accepted into the Moscow Conservatory, and at the age of thirteen, Taneyev was studying piano with Eduard Langer, theory with Nikolay Hubert, and composition with Tchaikovsky. It did not take long for him to become Nikolay Rubinstein's favorite piano student and, most importantly, Tchaikovsky's favorite composition pupil. Taneyev made his official debut with Brahms's D Minor Piano Concerto on January 29, 1875. The following May he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory with a gold medal for composition and performance, the first medal ever awarded to a student.

In Moscow, on December 3, 1875, Taneyev gave the European premiere of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto in B-flat Minor with Nikolay Rubinstein as conductor, two months after the world premiere which was given by Hans von Bülow on October 25, 1875, in Boston. Tchaikovsky's concerto received its first favorable critique after Taneyev's performance when Alexander Sergeyevich Famintsin reviewed it in *Musikalniy Listok*, writing that "it astounds the listener by its lucidity and joyousness of spirit from beginning to end."⁴

Tchaikovsky was overjoyed by Taneyev's outstanding performance, writing:

The interest of the Seventh Symphony concert was enhanced by the first appearance of the young pianist Sergei Taneyev, who brilliantly fulfilled all the hopes of his teachers on this occasion. Besides purity and strength of touch, grace, and ease of execution, Taneyev astonished everyone by his maturity of intellect, his self-control, and the

⁴ Herbert Weinstock, *Tchaikovsky* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 112.

calm objective style of his interpretation. While possessing all the qualities of his master, Taneyev cannot be regarded as a mere copyist. He has his own artistic individuality, which has won him a place among virtuosi from the very outset of his career. . . . The chief feature of his playing lies in his power to grasp the composer's intention in all its most delicate and minute details, and to realize them precisely as the author heard them himself.⁵

As a result, the premieres of the rest of Tchaikovsky's piano and orchestral works, as well as his piano trio, were performed by Taneyev. Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Major, which was composed in 1879-1880, was first performed in Moscow on May 30, 1882, with Taneyev as soloist and Anton Rubinstein as conductor. The Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello in A Minor was composed from December 1881 to February 1882 and had its premiere in Moscow on March 23, 1882, with Taneyev, Jan Hrimaly, and Wilhelm Fitzenhagen performing. Concert Fantasia for Piano in G Major, composed in 1884, had its premiere in Moscow on March 6, 1885, with Taneyev as soloist and Max Erdmannsdorfer as conductor. Piano Concerto No. 3 in E-flat Major, composed in 1893 during the last year of Tchaikovsky's life, was first performed on January 19, 1895, in St. Petersburg by Taneyev, one year after the composer's death. Taneyev completed and orchestrated Tchaikovsky's unfinished Andante and Finale for Piano in 1895, and performed it in Moscow on February 20, 1896.

Taneyev was not only a celebrated piano virtuoso but also an important theorist and teacher. A letter from Tchaikovsky to N. F. von Meck, dated July 14, 1884, confirmed that "Taneyev – whom I value very highly as musician, teacher, and theorist – would also be a suitable interpreter."⁶ Tchaikovsky compared Taneyev with Eugen d'Albert, who was considered one of the finest musicians of that time, and called him "the second Tausig."⁷ In 1878, when Tchaikovsky resigned as director of composition at the Moscow Conservatory, the only

⁵ Modest Tchaikovsky, *The Life and Letters of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky*, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London: J. Lane, 1906), 175.

⁶ Ibid., 459.

⁷ David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano* (New York: Harcourt Brace), 11.

candidate for his replacement was Taneyev. Tchaikovsky even decided to stay a couple of months longer “in order to give his successor Taneyev time to prepare for his classes; but when it was announced that Hubert, not Taneyev, was to succeed him, he ‘hastened the course of events’ and informed Rubinstein that he would leave Moscow early in October.”⁸ As a result, Taneyev taught the harmony and orchestration classes, and Hubert taught the composition classes. In 1880, Taneyev also began teaching Nikolay Rubinstein’s piano class, a year before Rubinstein died. For the next few years, Taneyev devoted more and more time to the Moscow Conservatory. In addition to teaching harmony, orchestration, and piano classes, he also began teaching Hubert’s composition classes soon after Hubert resigned in 1883.

After Nikolay Rubinstein died, Tchaikovsky served as the director of the Moscow Conservatory for a while but soon realized it was time to appoint a new director. Tchaikovsky wrote a letter to N. F. von Meck on May 26, 1885, saying he was “completely absorbed in the affairs of the Conservatory, and have decided that the position of director shall be offered to Taneyev. If I do not succeed in this, I shall retire from the Committee.”⁹ He also told his cousin, Anna Merklings, that he “spent three whole weeks at the conservatory examinations, learned its true condition and needs, and accomplished a complete reorganization – that is, raised Taneyev to the position of director.”¹⁰ This time, Tchaikovsky succeeded, but Taneyev was not very happy about his new appointment. He argued it was Tchaikovsky’s responsibility as a professor to do at least some work in the conservatory, which upset and greatly agitated Tchaikovsky who wrote to his brother Modest, “I didn’t sleep the entire night, or slept badly, and that with the help of some wine. No. It is better to die in poverty than to make a stupid sacrifice.”¹¹ Finally, Tchaikovsky agreed to teach some composition classes which he attended only once a month and

⁸ Ibid., 323.

⁹ Ibid., 483.

¹⁰ Herbert Weinstock, *Tchaikovsky* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 263.

then only gave some suggestions to a few students. For Taneyev, the conservatory work kept him so busy that he did not have time to compose, although he had made his debut as a composer at the age of 24 with the performance of *John of Damascus, Op. 1* for the unveiling of the Pushkin memorial in 1880.¹² Thus, Taneyev became the director of the Moscow Conservatory, and Tchaikovsky remained with the conservatory as a faculty member. In 1889, Tchaikovsky succeeded Taneyev as Chief of the Conservatory when Taneyev resigned the directorship, allowing Taneyev to spend more time teaching and composing.

In 1889, Taneyev began writing his book *Invertible Counterpoint in the Strict Style*, which he finished in 1906. Taneyev's polyphonic style was a valuable influence on his students, including Rachmaninov and Scriabin who were in Taneyev's counterpoint classes. It "opened up a new stage in the evolution of polyphonic music both in Russia and the world at large . . . [it] proved a challenge to the accepted idea of inviolability of academic traditions in this form, indeed, this tensely expressive music has something in common with the style of Rachmaninov and Scriabin."¹³

A major reason Taneyev's music was not popular was Taneyev's personality. Taneyev was a humble man and was quite critical of his own compositions. Thus, he did not want to publish many of his works, and instead showed them only to Tchaikovsky and a few of his friends. In a letter to Tchaikovsky dated August 12, 1880, Taneyev stated that he wanted to leave his compositions unsigned. Tchaikovsky disagreed and immediately replied:

I want, I desire, I love to have people interested in my music, to have them praise it and love it, but I have never been concerned with their interest in me personally, my appearance, my conversation. Not to sign my compositions because of my unsociable nature would be silly and stupid, for I must somehow distinguish myself from

¹¹ Ibid., 233.

¹² David Brown, "Taneyev, Sergey Ivanovich" in *Groves Dictionary for Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 66-68.

¹³ Nikolai Kopchevsky, ed., *Russian Piano Music*, with a preface by Mikhail Ovchinnikov (Moscow: Muzyka), 1986.

contemporaries speaking the same language. . . . I want a name, whether my own or a pseudonym, to serve as the label distinguishing my wares from those of others, and I want that label to be valued, to be in demand on the market, and to have recognition.¹⁴

Taneyev never completed or published his Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, although it was described in a letter dated December 16, 1876, by Tchaikovsky as “charming” and “not a single musician can deny its strong and appealing qualities despite its formal drawbacks.”¹⁵ Tchaikovsky urged him to finish the concerto with a brilliant finale as soon as possible and have it published, and Taneyev replied to him in a letter dated March 24, 1877, that he would finish it in the summer.¹⁶ Unfortunately, Taneyev did not write the third movement. The first 2 movements of the concerto were kept in Rimsky-Korsakov’s collection of personal papers until the concerto was published in Moscow in 1957. Consequently, many of Taneyev’s works have remained unknown until relatively recently.

Another reason Taneyev left this concerto incomplete was his frustration over negative comments made by Anton Rubinstein. With Tchaikovsky’s recommendation, Taneyev consulted Anton Rubinstein for suggestions regarding the piano concerto. Taneyev was so discouraged by Rubinstein’s critique that he decided to give up and never attempt to write another piano concerto, even though Tchaikovsky kept encouraging him to finish the concerto with a brilliant finale and have it published.

¹⁴ Herbert Weinstock, *Tchaikovsky* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 223.

¹⁵ *P. I. Chaikovskii: S. I. Taneev. Pis'ma*, ed. V.A. Zhdanov (Moscow: Muzykal'zoe izdatel'stvo, 1951), 4-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

CHAPTER 3

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE AND INFLUENCE

As a composer, Taneyev is considered a master of structure and counterpoint. In *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, there is a comparison between Taneyev and Glinka:

He was the antithesis of Glinka, for whereas the latter was possessed of a powerful and vivid imagination but was deficient in technique, Taneyev had little imagination but commanded a compositional skill unsurpassed by any Russian composer of his period.¹⁷

In a letter to Tchaikovsky, Taneyev wrote about his compositional process for his opera *The Oresteia*, which illustrates his logical method of composing:

(My approach) means that not one number is written in its final form until the outline of the whole work is prepared. It is written, you might say, concentrically, not by composing the whole out of the separate, successive parts, but by going from the whole to the details: from the opera to the acts, from the acts to the scenes, from the scenes to the separate numbers. . . . Thus one may perceive the most important points in the drama on which the attention of the composer must be most concentrated, determine the length of scenes and numbers according to their importance, plan the modulatory scheme of the acts, define the orchestral sounds, and such like.¹⁸

From this letter, one can easily view the craftsmanship Taneyev put into his composition, in addition to his ability to organize a large work. Rachmaninov must have learned this kind of skill from him, as he described his own way of composing:

Behind every composition, is the architectural plan of the composer. The student should endeavor, first of all, to discover this plan, and then he should build in the manner in which the composer would have had him build.¹⁹

Another amazing technique of developing motifs to a climax by using descending or ascending sequences also greatly influenced Rachmaninoff. The C1 motif (see Appendix) was rearranged on piano as thick block chords with the left hand's rapid chromatic features as background from measure 190 and was developed to a very exciting climax in measures 206-213

¹⁷ David Brown, "Taneyev, "Sergey Ivanovich," in *The New Grove's Dictionary for Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. 25, 66-68.

¹⁸ Modest Tchaikovsky, *Letters of Tchaikovsky and Taneyev*, ed: Pis'ma P. I. Chaykovskovo i. S. I. Taneyeva (Moscow, 1916).

(see Example 1). This kind of writing can be found in many of Rachmaninoff's compositions, known as the famous "Rachmaninoff accumulations." Example 2 is from Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2.

Example 1. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 190-204

The musical score for Example 1 consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a grand staff for the piano (treble and bass clefs), a staff for strings (violin and viola), and a staff for woodwinds (flute and oboe). The piano part features dense, vertical chordal textures. The woodwind part has a melodic line with a 'cresc.' marking. The string part has a 'p cresc.' marking. The second system continues the piano part with a 'f' marking and the woodwind part with a 'tutti' marking. The score is in E-flat major and 3/4 time.

Example 2. Rachmaninoff, Second Piano Concerto, First Movement, Measures 222-237

The musical score for Example 2 consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a grand staff for the piano (treble and bass clefs), a staff for strings (violin and viola), and a staff for woodwinds (flute and oboe). The piano part features dense, vertical chordal textures. The woodwind part has a melodic line with a 'cresc.' marking. The string part has a 'p cresc.' marking. The second system continues the piano part with a 'f' marking and the woodwind part with a 'tutti' marking. The score is in E-flat major and 3/4 time.

¹⁹ David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 205.



Similarities between Taneyev's Piano Concerto and Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto also exist. Example 3 shows a transition between exposition and development in the first movement of Taneyev's Piano Concerto. Taneyev wrote a dramatic change in dynamics, beginning in double forte (*ff*) and diminishing to piano (*p*), using ascending scale elements. In Example 4, from Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, the passage also transitions in dynamics from *ff* diminishing to *p*, using similar ascending scale elements. This kind of transition successfully connects two completely different elements smoothly, with dramatic dynamic changes. However, since Taneyev did not publish his piano concerto, one cannot know if Taneyev shared his concerto as an example or if he even suggested a transition similar to this kind in his composition class, although similar transitions in his students' compositions clearly suggest the possibility.

Example 3. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 344-352

ritard.

ff

f

ritard.

44 a tempo

44 a tempo

ff dim.

p

f

dim.

Example 4. Rachmaninoff, Second Piano Concerto, Third Movement, Measures 275-285

ff

f

dim.

ff

f

dim.

cresc.

f

dim.

A musical score for piano and strings, consisting of two systems of staves. The top system features a piano (p) part with a treble and bass staff, and a string quartet (mf) part with two staves. The bottom system features a piano (pp) part with a treble and bass staff, and a string quartet (mf) part with two staves. The piano part in the top system is marked with a *p* dynamic, and the piano part in the bottom system is marked with a *pp* dynamic. The string quartet part in the top system is marked with a *mf* dynamic, and the string quartet part in the bottom system is marked with a *mf* dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

CHAPTER 4

RELATIONSHIP WITH TCHAIKOVSKY

As Tchaikovsky's favorite composition pupil, Taneyev developed a life-long friendship with his teacher. Tchaikovsky often asked Taneyev for suggestions in many of his works, and he always took Taneyev's opinions seriously. Opposed to the amateurs known as the "Russian Mighty Five,"²⁰ who were led by Balakirev, Taneyev's conservatory training made him a master of form and counterpoint. His craftsmanship and contrapuntalism influenced his students, including Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Glière, and Lyapunov. His architectural technique was exactly what Tchaikovsky needed. Tchaikovsky wrote many letters to show his deep appreciation to Taneyev for his valuable suggestions. The following two letters are representative of Tchaikovsky's thoughts.

To S. I. Taneyev.
Kamenka, October 29th (November 10th), 1882.

My best thanks for your letter, dear Serge Ivanovich. Your approval of my Trio gives me very great pleasure. In my eyes you are a great authority, and my artistic vanity is as much flattered by your praise, as it is insensible to the opinions of the Press, for experience has taught me to regard them with philosophical indifference.²¹

Tchaikovsky to Taneyev.
Clarens, March 27th (April 8th), 1878

Dear Serge,-- I have read your letter with the greatest pleasure and interest... You need not be afraid that your criticism of my fourth Symphony is too severe. You have simply given me your frank opinion, for which I am grateful. I want this kind of opinion, not choruses of praise. . . .

Please, dear Serge, do not see any shadow of annoyance in my defence of the Symphony; of course I should like you to be pleased with everything I write, but I am quite satisfied with the interest you always show me. You can not think how delighted I am with your approval of *Onegin*. I value your opinion very highly, and the more frankly you express it, the more I feel its worth. And so I cordially thank you, and beg you not to

²⁰ Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Mussorgsky, and Cui were known as the "Russian Five."

²¹ Modest Tchaikovsky, *The life and letters of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky*, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London: J. Lane, 1906), 429.

be afraid of overseverity. I want just those stinging criticisms from you. So long as you give me the truth, what does it matter whether it is favourable or not?²²

Tchaikovsky considered Taneyev “the most trusted musician among his friends.”²³

Tchaikovsky needed someone to look for his weakness in architecture and forms. Harold Schonberg gave a precise description of Tchaikovsky’s lack of ability regarding form and structure:

As a student of the music of Mozart and the Classical composers, and as a creator who tried to clothe his music in appropriate forms, Tchaikovsky throughout his life struggled with architectural problems. Unlike The Five, he was greatly concerned with form. But his mind did not have the kind of logic and imagination that could weld various elements into an organic whole.²⁴

This problem was also revealed in a letter to N. F. von Meck when Tchaikovsky wrote her about the method he used to compose:

What has been set down in a moment of ardour must now be critically examined, improved, extended, or condensed, as the form requires. Sometimes one must do oneself violence, must sternly and pitilessly take part against oneself, before one can mercilessly erase things thought out with love and enthusiasm. I cannot complain of poverty of imagination, or lack of inventive power; but, on the other hand, I have always suffered from my want of skill in the management of form. Only after strenuous labour have I at last succeeded in making the form of my compositions correspond, more or less, with their contents. Formerly I was careless and did not give sufficient attention to the critical overhauling of my sketches. Consequently my seams showed, and there was no organic union between my individual episodes. This was a very serious defect, and I only improved gradually as time went on; but the form of my works will never be exemplary, because, although I can modify, I cannot radically alter the essential qualities of my musical temperament.²⁵

If Tchaikovsky lacked a logical approach to his compositions, Taneyev certainly did not.

One does not necessarily need to be creative and imaginative to be a good composer; Taneyev had a more logical mind rather than a musical mind. How many composers have had both? There are not many, but J. S. Bach and W. A. Mozart certainly belong to this group. It is no

²² Ibid., 294-295.

²³ John Warrack, *Tchaikovsky* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973), 82.

²⁴ Harold Schonberg, *The Lives of The Great Composers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 371.

coincidence that Bach was Taneyev's musical idol, and Mozart was Tchaikovsky's "Music God."

On the other hand, Taneyev needed his master's brilliant melodic talent which came from his pure love for music. From the many letters Tchaikovsky wrote to Taneyev, one thing Tchaikovsky always mentioned was his feeling for the music, as illustrated in the following letter:

To S.I. Taneyev. January 14th, 1891.

The question: How should opera be written? is one I answer, have answered, and always shall answer, in the simplest way. Operas, like everything else, should be written just as they come to us. I always try to express in the music as truthfully and sincerely as possible all there is in the text. But truth and sincerity are not the result of a process of reasoning, but the inevitable outcome of our inmost feelings. In order that these feelings should have warmth and vitality, I always choose subjects in which I have to deal with real men and women, who share the emotions as myself. That is why I cannot bear the Wagnerian subjects, in which there is so little human interest. . . . As soon as I have found a subject, and decided to compose an opera, I give free rein to my feelings, neither trying to carry out Wagner's principals, nor striving after originality. . . . I have never been untrue to myself.²⁶

Taneyev's piano concerto most certainly captures the "inmost feelings" of the music. In the second movement of his piano concerto, which is a funeral march, Taneyev chose the motifs carefully, using dissonant chords with unusual harmonic progressions. He successfully created a solemn and stirring funeral march.

²⁵ Modest Tchaikovsky, *The life and letters of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky*, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London: J. Lane, 1906), 311-312.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 621-622.

CHAPTER 5

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TANEYEV'S PIANO CONCERTO AND TCHAIKOVSKY'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1

Based on the relationship between Tchaikovsky and Taneyev, it is not difficult to see that Taneyev's piano concerto, which was composed less than two years after Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, was influenced by his teacher's work. Tchaikovsky's comments must have affected Taneyev when he wrote his first and only concerto. Taneyev's original manuscript has over one hundred markings and suggestions in Tchaikovsky's handwriting.²⁷ Not only do the concertos have many similarities, but the Rubinstein brothers' critiques of both concertos are also very interesting.

With Tchaikovsky's recommendation, Taneyev took his unfinished piano concerto to Anton Rubinstein for suggestions. Taneyev described A. Rubinstein's comments in a letter to Tchaikovsky:

(2 December 1876)

I spent an entire evening at his house. He listened to both movements of the concerto, examined them in great detail and made many remarks for which I am very grateful and which I will undoubtedly put to use. The following points contain the essence of these remarks regarding the first movement:

1. Too long.
2. Rhythmically monotonous. The first two subjects are both in 4/4 – which is very wearisome.
3. Lack of interesting ideas in the piano part. There is not a single place where the pianist can “show off.”
4. The piano hardly ever plays in the higher registers – mainly in the lower. The first theme is too often stated “ff” after a crescendo on the dominant.²⁸

²⁷ Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 73.

²⁸ P. I. Chaikovsky, *S. I. Taneyev: Pis'ma*, ed. V. A. Zhdanov (Moscow: Muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1951), p. 4.

Taneyev was so discouraged he decided to give up and never attempt to write another piano concerto, but Tchaikovsky kept encouraging him to finish the concerto with a brilliant finale and have it published.

Nikolay Rubinstein's comments to Tchaikovsky regarding his first piano concerto two years before were even worse. Tchaikovsky described the event in a well-known letter to N. F. von Meck in 1878:

In December, 1874, I had written a pianoforte concerto. . . . We were invited to Albrecht's house, and, before we went, Nicholas Rubinstein proposed I should meet him in one of the classrooms at the conservatoire to go through the concerto. I arrived with my manuscript, and Rubinstein and Hubert soon appeared.

I played the first movement. Never a word, never a single remark. Do you know the awkward and ridiculous sensation of putting before a meal which you have cooked yourself, which he eats—and holds his tongue? Oh, for a single word, for friendly abuse, for anything to break the silence! For God's sake say something! But Rubinstein never opened his lips. He was preparing his thunderbolt, and Hubert was waiting to see which way the wind would blow. . . . Rubinstein's silence was eloquent. 'My dear friend,' he seemed to be saying to himself, 'how can I speak of the details when the work itself goes entirely against the grain?'

Then a torrent broke from Rubinstein's lips. Gentle at first, gathering volume as it proceeded, and finally bursting into the fury of a Jupiter-Tonans. My concerto was worthless, absolutely unplayable; the passages so broken, so disconnected, so unskillfully written, that they could not even be improved; the work itself was bad, trivial, common; here and there I had stolen from other people; only one or two pages were worth anything; all the rest had better be destroyed, or entirely rewritten.²⁹

At the end of the hearing, Tchaikovsky had a moment of pain, but he replied firmly, "I shall not alter a single note, I shall publish the work precisely as it stands."³⁰ As a result of this decision, Tchaikovsky's concerto was successful, and Taneyev's concerto was basically unknown.

Taneyev's concerto was kept in Rimsky-Korsakov's personal collections until it was published in 1957; the first recording was not made until 2005. The world premiere recording of Taneyev's

²⁹ Modest Tchaikovsky, *The life and letters of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky*, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London: J. Lane, 1906), 165-167.

³⁰ Ibid.

Piano Concerto in E-flat Major was given by Joseph Banowetz as the piano soloist and Thomas Sanderling as conductor with the Russian Philharmonic of Moscow.

The opinions of the highly-regarded Rubinstein brothers, founders of the Moscow Music Conservatory and the St. Petersburg Music Conservatory, did reveal some truth about these two concertos. In a book edited by Gerald Abraham, Eric Blom gave a detailed analysis of Tchaikovsky's concerto from Nikolay Rubinstein's point of view:

(a) The composition is as bad as a whole because the concerto has an unbalanced, lop-sided structure. (b) The music is worthless and trivial because 'there is not a theme in it, whether invented or borrowed.' (c) The piano parts are unplayable because 'even a cursory glance through the score of the B flat minor Concerto shows that what Tchaikovsky did manufacture here, if one likes to use that term, was a long series of keyboard devices which are extremely difficult almost without exception and most decidedly possess the interest not only of their difficulty, but also of a quite astonishing variety.'³¹

There is also some truth in Anton Rubinstein's opinion of Taneyev's concerto. He believed the piece was too long, which it is; the first movement has 794 measures and takes 25 to 30 minutes to perform. If Taneyev had written the last movement, it would likely have been at least the same length as the first movement in order to balance the full concerto, which would have resulted in over a one-hour performance. Second, Rubinstein found the rhythm monotonous and the themes too repetitive. The first theme confirms this (see Appendix). There are two phrases and a codetta in the first theme. Each phrase has two sentences; the second sentence has the same rhythmic pattern and melodic structure as the first sentence. Third, Rubinstein noted that there were not many pianistic features in this piece. The concerto contains few Lisztian virtuoso elements. Instead, Taneyev incorporated many difficult contrapuntal writings, as illustrated in Example 5. Taneyev used his outstanding counterpoint technique to combine two different motifs, C1 and the ending part of E2, into a four-part writing.

³¹ Eric Blom, "Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra" in *The Music of Tchaikovsky*, ed. Gerald Abraham (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 47-57.

Example 5. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 501-508

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Taneyev's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, specifically measures 501 through 508. The score is arranged in two systems, each containing three staves. The top system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass line. The bottom system also includes a grand staff and a separate bass line. The music is characterized by intricate rhythmic patterns, including frequent triplets and sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings such as 'espress' (expressive) and 'pp' (pianissimo) are present. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and articulation marks, indicating a complex and technically demanding piece.

Finally, as Rubinstein noted, the piano remains in the lower register almost throughout the entire piece. Indeed, only a few parts of this concerto use the two highest octaves on the piano. Perhaps Taneyev was trying to achieve an orchestral effect of the melancholy Russian tradition.

It is very difficult to judge a piano concerto fairly by simply looking at the score and listening to a performance with two pianos without hearing a full orchestral performance with the solo. Perhaps this is why Nikolay Rubinstein's critique of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto was so negative, a concerto which is now one of the most popular piano concertos in the world.

The differences between Tchaikovsky's and Taneyev's piano concertos can be explained in part by Nikolay Rubinstein's critique of Tchaikovsky's composition. Taneyev would certainly have known about Rubinstein's comments and likely tried to avoid those problems. For example,

unlike Tchaikovsky's unbalanced structure in which the most famous first theme in the introduction never returns, Taneyev's concerto has a very formal and clear outline (see Chart 1). The harmonic structure and the thematic arrangement are flawless.

In order to avoid being too trivial with a lack of themes, Taneyev gave very clear statements for each theme; furthermore, the themes themselves have different characters. For example, the first theme's irregular interval setting has an angular melodic outline while the second theme contains smooth, major scale elements (see Appendix). This setting builds a contrasting mood of sad and sweet. Jeremy Norris described the first theme as "surely the ugliest, most ungainly opening subjects in concerto literature."³² With his broad knowledge of music, Taneyev would definitely know this was an ugly, dull theme. On the other hand, the undecorated melody with a repetitious rhythm can bring to life a typical wild, rough, and majestic male character. If the first theme was really the ugliest, the composer could give the second theme a little "makeup" and make the whole movement come alive. In just such a manner, *Beauty and the Beast* became legend with such a deep contrast between sorrow and happiness, dark and light, dead and live, evil and angel, majestic and feminine – the goal Taneyev tried to reach. Taneyev's second theme is beautiful and charming, filling the whole movement with dramatic changes and unexpected contrast. With his counterpoint technique to combine different motifs together, Taneyev avoided a composition which could be described as being too trivial and had "not a theme in it," as Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 had been criticized. Taneyev's long first movement became an integrated unit of different motifs and themes, illustrating his ability to organize a large work.

Taneyev's piano concerto does not contain as many virtuoso passages as Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, but it is still a challenge for concert pianists. Examination of the score

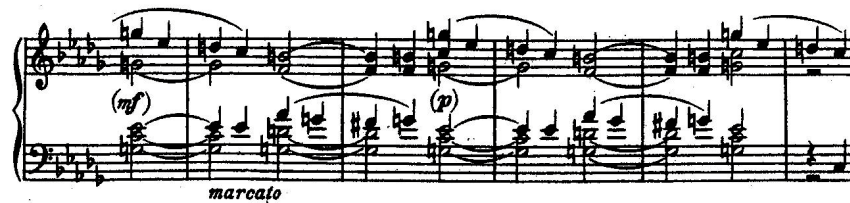
³² Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 74.

reveals neat, well-organized piano parts, unlike Tchaikovsky's composition which is filled with jumping intervals, "clumsy passages," and dizzying "keyboard devices."

After avoiding his master's weaknesses, Taneyev logically continued to employ Tchaikovsky's "good" elements. Example 6 shows a similarity to his master's famous "orchestrally conceived piano writing,"³³ of which Tchaikovsky was very proud (Example 7). Example 6. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 238-243



Example 7. Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1, First Movement, Measures 197-202



Example 8 also shows borrowed materials from Example 9. The borrowing is so obvious that "one wonders why Tchaikovsky did not comment on this clear act of plagiarism."³⁴ The double octaves passage in the piano is astonishing, so powerful that no one will deny this is a brilliant invention from a brilliant mind.

³³ Ibid., 75.

³⁴ Ibid., 76.

Example 8. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 434-438



Example 9. Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1, First Movement, Measures 352-355



In Taneyev's orchestration, the section containing the most obvious similarity to Tchaikovsky is from measures 256-266, at the end of the exposition (see Example 10). When the altered second theme returns, Taneyev placed it in the clarinet line, followed by the flute, with the piano playing arpeggios as accompaniment. Similarly, in Tchaikovsky's concerto in measures 275-292, also at the end of the exposition, the flute plays the second theme and the piano plays arpeggios (see Example 11). This kind of instrumental orchestration results in a beautiful melody with a gentle background of harmony produced by piano arpeggios.

Example 10. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 257-260

Example 10 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 257-260. The key signature is E-flat major (three flats). The first system (measures 257-258) features a piano (p) part with a five-measure rest and a grand piano (pp) part with sustained chords. The second system (measures 259-260) features a piano (p) part with a seven-measure rest and a grand piano (pp) part with sustained chords. Measure numbers 32 and 33 are indicated at the start of each system.

Example 11. Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1, First Movement, Measures 276-281

Example 11 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 276-281. The key signature is E-flat major (three flats). The first system (measures 276-277) features a piano (p) part with a five-measure rest and a grand piano (pp) part with sustained chords. The second system (measures 278-279) features a piano (p) part with a seven-measure rest and a grand piano (pp) part with sustained chords. Measure numbers 32 and 33 are indicated at the start of each system.

In contrast to his master's concerto, Taneyev incorporated whole tone scales, many of which are found at the beginning of the development (see Example 12). Glinka was one of the first group of Russian composers to employ whole tone scales.³⁵

Example 12. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Measures 355-356



³⁵ Michael Kennedy, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 957.

CHAPTER 6

A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The first movement of Taneyev's Piano Concerto is a standard sonata-allegro form. The Appendix shows the principal themes and motifs of the first movement. Chart 1 gives a detailed analysis of how the movement is organized with the themes and motifs shown in the Appendix and lists the key changes as they occur. Some themes and transitions are a combination of motifs or varied motifs (see Example 5 and Example 24).

The exposition section contains the first theme A1 (see Example 13) and second theme A2 (see Example 14). Motif C1 (see Example 15) appears in almost all the transitions, including the introduction and coda.

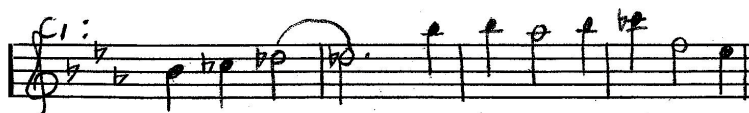
Example 13. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, First Theme A1



Example 14. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Second Theme A2



Example 15. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Motif C1

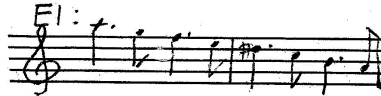


In the development section, Taneyev introduced new material shown in Examples 16, 17, and 18 as motifs D2, E1, and E2. Motif D2 begins the same as D1 but then develops into a new motif (see Example 19). The first and second themes in their varied forms appear throughout the development section. In this way Taneyev organized a long concerto into an integrated unit and avoided the criticism of his master's work of composing a piece with too many trivial phrases.

Example 16. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Motif D2



Example 17. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Motif E1



Example 18. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Motif E2



Example 19. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement, Motif D1



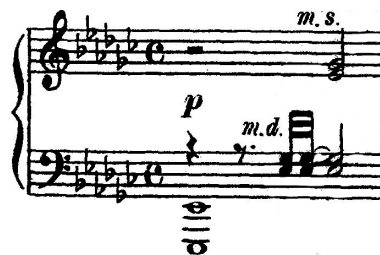
Chart 1 illustrates the structure of the first movement, including the organization with the themes and motifs shown in the Appendix and the key changes as they occur.

Chart 1. Analysis of Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, First Movement

Introduction				Exposition						
Orchestra			Piano	Orch.	Piano & Orch.	Piano	Cl, Fl, & Piano	Piano & Orch.		
Theme 1	Transition	Theme 2	Elements of	Theme 1	Altered Elements of	Theme 2	Altered Theme 2	Theme 2	Transition	
A1 B1	C	A2 C	C	A1 B1	A1 B1	A2	A'2	A2	D1 & C	
E♭	E♭	E♭	E♭	E♭	E♭-----B♭	B♭	G♭	B♭	A♭-----B♭	
mm1-59	mm60-75	mm76-128	mm129-152	mm153-90	mm190-237	mm237-56	mm257-66	mm267-90	mm290-349	
Development										
				Orch.	Piano & Orch.					
Whole Tone New Elements On D2 & E1				Elements of Theme 1 On Bass A1 C		Double Octaves On Piano Reversed D2 & E1		Altered Theme 2 A'2		
Multi key Structure Build on Chromatic Scale mm349-401				G♭-----E♭ mm401-15		Multi Keys Structure mm416-42		E mm443-67		
				Piano & Orch.				Piano		
Counterpoints on Piano With Elements of E2			Counterpoints on Piano With Elements of E2 & A'2				Transition To Rec. Block Chords			
D minor mm467-80	B-flat minor mm480-88	C minor mm488-500	G♭ mm501-22 B♭ mm523-37				E♭ mm539-44			
Recapitulation										
Piano	Orch.	Piano	Cl. Fl. With Piano			Piano & Orch.		Coda (Largamente)		
Theme 1 Return	Transition	Theme 2 Return	Altered Theme 2			Theme 2	Transition	Piano & Orch Elements of		
A1	C	A2	A'2			A2	C	C		
E♭	E♭	E♭	B			E♭	E♭ D♭ B♭ E♭	E♭		
mm545-64	mm565-88	mm589-99	mm600-17			mm618-34	mm635-67	mm668-788		

The second movement is a funeral march, containing 98 measures and lasting only six minutes. Anton Rubinstein did not comment on this movement. There are two main characteristics in this short movement. One is an imitation of a church tower bell which is present for almost the entire movement (see Example 20). Another main characteristic, a motif with a dotted rhythm, represents the funeral march (see Example 21). Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto also begins with the sound of a church tower bell. Both Taneyev's and Rachmaninoff's bell tone motifs are presented in a harmonic progression (see Example 22 and Example 23).

Example 20. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, Second Movement, First Main Characteristic



Example 21. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, Second Movement, Second Main Characteristic



Example 22. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, Second Movement, Measures 1-8

Example 23. Rachmaninoff, Second Piano Concerto, First Movement, Measures 1-8

The short second movement can be considered in an A B A form:

A	B	A	Cadenza	Coda
mm 1-17	mm 18-45	mm 46-65	mm 66-71	mm 72-98
E-flat minor	E-flat minor to A-minor	E-flat minor	E-flat minor	E-flat minor

The B section modulates from E-flat minor to A minor, meaning it modulates to the tritone (see Example 24). Beethoven was one of the first composers to use this kind of modulation. In his

Piano Concerto No. 4, measures 191-199, Beethoven modulated from F minor to B minor (see Example 25). Modulating to the tritone became popular in the late nineteenth century. The modulation was one of Liszt's favorite as well as Tchaikovsky's, Taneyev's, and Rachmaninoff's.

In the second movement, Taneyev successfully created a solemn and stirring funeral march by employing many dissonant block chords such as the augmented sixth, ninth, and thirteenth with a delayed resolution. Example 24 shows resolution to a key of A minor, but the leading G-sharp tone appears later. This kind of delayed resolution creates a feeling of long-lasting stress without relief. It is reasonable for this movement to last less than six minutes. Few people can tolerate this kind of depressing and stressful mood for very long.

Example 24. Taneyev, Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, Second Movement, Measures 18-32

The image displays a musical score for Example 24, which is the second movement of Taneyev's Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, measures 18-32. The score is written for piano and clarinet. The piano part is characterized by complex, dissonant block chords and a delayed resolution. The clarinet part has a single note marked 'pp'. The score is written in E-flat major, with a key signature of three flats. The tempo is marked 'm.s.' (moderato sostenuto). The dynamics range from 'f' (forte) to 'pp' (pianissimo). The score is divided into two systems, with measures 18-32 shown. The first system includes measures 18-24, and the second system includes measures 25-32. The piano part features a prominent augmented sixth chord in measure 20, which resolves to a key of A minor, but the leading G-sharp tone appears later. This creates a feeling of long-lasting stress without relief.



Example 25. Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 4, Measures 191-202

Example 25. Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 4, Measures 191-202. The score is in G major, 4/4 time. It features a piano (*p*) and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The music is written for piano and includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand of the first system.

This musical score page contains two systems of music. The first system features a piano (p) and a first violin (Vl. I) part. The piano part has a treble and bass staff, with a forte (f) dynamic marking at the beginning. The first violin part is marked *marcato* and *fp*. The second system features a piano (p) and a woodwind part. The piano part continues with a forte (f) dynamic. The woodwind part includes a first violin (Vl. I) and an oboe (Ob.) part, both marked *fp*. The oboe part has a *p* dynamic marking. The woodwind part also includes a bassoon (Bn.) and a viola (Vlc.) part, both marked *p*. The woodwind part has a *p* dynamic marking. The woodwind part also includes a bassoon (Bn.) and a viola (Vlc.) part, both marked *p*. The woodwind part has a *p* dynamic marking.

CHAPTER 7

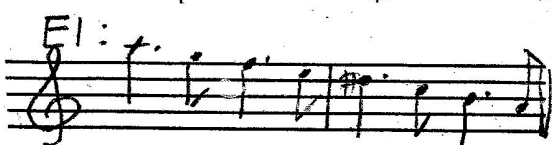
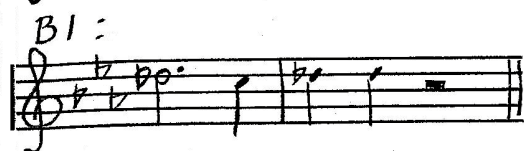
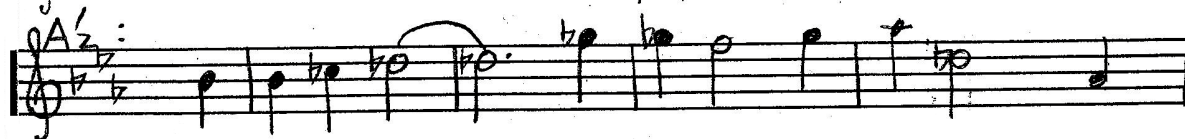
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Taneyev's piano concerto certainly should be considered a valuable addition to the piano concerto repertoire for historical and theoretical examination. Taneyev had a close relationship with not only Tchaikovsky, but also with the "Russian Mighty Five" and the Rubinstein brothers; he taught many of the great Russian composers, including Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Glière, and Lyapunov. Taneyev's achievements and influence possess a remarkable standing in Russian music history. As more of his compositions are discovered, it will certainly give greater value to the research about Taneyev and his music.

From both a performance and theoretical point of view, Taneyev's piano concerto contains many valuable features to study. Taneyev's individuality, conservatory trained abilities, and harmonic progressions are definitely excellent materials for teaching purposes. In addition, as a respected concert pianist whom Tchaikovsky admired so much, Taneyev's piano music contains many pianistic features that challenge concert pianists. As Tchaikovsky's favorite composition student and most trusted musician, Taneyev's music reflects his master's tutelage. As Rachmaninoff's composition teacher, Taneyev influenced his musical works. If people adore Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, Taneyev's music will soon be accepted by the world.

APPENDIX

TANEYEV, PIANO CONCERTO IN E-FLAT MAJOR, FIRST MOVEMENT, THEMES AND MOTIFS



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